



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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10 Sweet Facts About the Halloween Chocolate You Ate Last Weekend



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During Halloween this past weekend, Americans young and old handed out and ate a lot of sweets. At the center of the spike in candy consumption was chocolate, the treat of choice for adult Americans.

With humble beginnings on a tree miles and miles away, chocolate – a mainstay in U.S. store aisles this time of year – is so much more than just a delicious treat. Millions of farming families make a living producing it in rural areas around the world.

How much do you know about chocolate and its connection to smallholder farmers? Read on to unwrap more facts about the chocolate you enjoyed.

- 1.** A chocolaty treat starts with a tree in a tropical area. Chocolate is made from cocoa beans, which grow in a pod on a cacao tree. Most of the world's chocolate is grown in areas within 10 degrees north or south of the equator in West Africa, South America and Asia.
- 2.** Cocoa requires care. Farmers have to shield their cacao trees from the wind and sun (often by growing them under other trees), fertilize the soil around them, and keep a close eye out for pests and disease. To do so, they need resources, knowledge and skills – Feed the Future and its partners help them manage their farms more efficiently and effectively.
- 3.** Cocoa takes time. A cacao tree doesn't reach peak production of pods until it's 5 years old.
- 4.** Each cocoa pod yields 20-50 beans and a cacao tree yields around 20-30 of these pods a year. It takes 500 beans to make one pound of chocolate, so each tree produces anywhere from one to three pounds of chocolate.
- 5.** The chocolate flavor of the cocoa beans comes out when the beans are roasted. But only after they've been fermented in their natural pulp and dried for a few days.

6. Crack open a cocoa bean and you'll find the nib, from which chocolate is made. As chocolate processors grind the nib into a paste, the cocoa butter inside it melts, creating cocoa liquor. This liquor forms the base of chocolate products and can be refined in different ways to change taste and color.

7. Getting from cocoa to chocolate is a long process! After all the steps above, processors further refine the cocoa liquor, mix it with other ingredients, heat and stir it, and then – at long last – it's ready to use in baking and candy making.

8. The process of heating, mixing and smoothing the cocoa liquor mixture is called *conching* and can take anywhere from a few hours to three or more days. Longer conching means smoother chocolate.

9. Cocoa is essential to the livelihoods of millions of people around the world, including the five to six million farmers who grow it – the vast majority of them smallholders. Despite the worldwide demand for chocolate, these farming families often live in extreme poverty. With some help from Feed the Future, they can improve production, earn more, connect to the global economy, and rise out of poverty.

10. All along these steps in the value chain, the cocoa industry is full of potential for women's empowerment. Feed the Future helps women cocoa farmers and entrepreneurs get the resources and skills they need to thrive.

As Halloween gives way to the holiday season and we continue to share and enjoy sweets, let's remember the smallholder farmers who make chocolate possible from miles and miles away.

Want more cocoa facts? Check out the [World Cocoa Foundation website](#) for additional information on some of the facts above and more.

Read more stories of how Feed the Future works with cocoa farmers in the Latin America and the Caribbean chapter of our [2015 progress report](#), which we'll publish later this week!